




Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
730 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA 02476
Phone: 781-316-3000

webmaster@town.arlington.ma.us

Open Space Forum Feb. 2007

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Transportation Land Development Environmental S e r v i c e s			
 <i>Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.</i>		101 Walnut Street P. O. Box 9151 Watertown, MA 02471-9151 617 924 1770 FAX 617 924 2286	
Memorandum		To: Ann LeRoyer	Date: February 20, 2007
Project No.:		10011.00	
		From: Ralph Willmer, AICP	Re: Public Forum Notes

The public forum was held at the Town Hall Auditorium in Arlington with about 50 people in attendance. After opening remarks by Selectwomen Annie Lacourt and Clarissa Rowe on the importance of the open space planning process, Ann LeRoyer, the Chair of the Arlington Open Space Committee, started the meeting with a brief statement. Ann explained to those in attendance the importance of data compilation and implementation of the Open Space and Recreation Plan and she talked about the history of open space planning in Arlington. She then introduced both Ralph Willmer and Lauren Gallagher from VHB atlants for the new plan and Ralph began his presentation.

Ralph's presentation was a broad-brush introduction to how the VHB team was approaching this first step for the Arlington Open Space and Recreation Plan. Ralph introduced some baseline facts about Arlington to the audience. This included demographic and land use data. Next, Ralph broke down the number of parks and playgrounds in Arlington as well as the acreage of preserved open space. Following that was an explanation of the open space and recreation planning process that explained what is required to complete the updated plan. Finally, Ralph ended on a look back at the goals from the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan. This examination led into an extensive discussion on possible additions to these previous goals. No new goals were proposed, but some ideas were presented that may lead to an additional goal and some new objectives. After the discussion was over, the crowd was invited up to vote via stickers on which goals from the 2002 plan they found most important. Lastly, after everyone was back in their seats a short Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) exercise was conducted. All of the activities mentioned above are summarized chronologically below.

1. Goals/Objectives Review and Open Comments

In no particular order, the following comments were made on the 2002 Goals and Objectives:

- Ø Specify and quantify undeveloped land that should be protected.
- Ø Plan implementation fell short of expectations.
- Ø More regional coordination is needed.
- Ø Enhance "thread-like" connections to existing or future open spaces.
- Ø More effective and attractive streetscapes should be encouraged – incorporate public spaces into new developments.

- Ø Better maintenance of existing open spaces needed.
- Ø Preservation of Elizabeth Island on Spy Pond should be a priority.
- Ø More consideration should be given to greater diversity of public space uses – not just for youth, but also for senior citizens.
- Ø Consider trade-offs for development – create a formula for what might be acceptable and focus on specific sites.
- Ø Balance ecosystem with open space.

2. 2002 Goals' Importance as Judged by the Crowd

1. Acquire undeveloped lands for permanent protection as open space in neighborhoods throughout Town. (voted top priority – 55 votes)
2. Preserve, protect and enhance existing open spaces, including watersheds and natural areas; parks, playgrounds and outdoor recreational facilities; and historic sites and cultural landscapes. (voted as second highest priority – 49 votes, inclusive of objectives listed below)
 - A. Preserve and protect the Town's natural heritage, including watersheds, water bodies, native flora and fauna, and all existing natural areas. (11 votes)
 - B. Preserve, protect and enhance Arlington's parks, playgrounds, playing fields and other outdoor recreation spaces. (6 votes)
 - C. Preserve, protect and enhance Arlington's historic open space sites and cultural landscapes. (5 votes)
3. Coordinate and strengthen local and regional planning and management of open spaces in conjunction with various Town departments, commissions and volunteer groups, and work closely with nearby towns and regional entities and with state and federal officials and agencies. (voted as third highest priority – 18 votes, inclusive of objectives listed below)
 - A. Work within the Town of Arlington to better coordinate and manage open space goals and objectives. (1 vote)
 - B. Work at the regional level to coordinate planning and development initiatives that protect and enhance open space across jurisdictions. (4 votes)
 - C. Engage state officials and state and federal agencies in efforts by the Town to acquire, maintain and manage open space and outdoor recreation resources. (6 votes)
4. Increase public awareness, accessibility and community stewardship of the Town's open spaces. (voted as fourth highest priority – 13 votes, inclusive of objectives listed below)
 - A. Develop a stewardship program for major open spaces and key neighborhood parks. (1 vote)
 - B. Increase public awareness and educate Town residents about open space and recreational resources. (1 vote)
 - C. Provide greater use of and improved access to key water bodies, natural areas and recreational facilities.

3. Swot exercise summary

Strengths

- Ø Friends of Great Meadows and other "friends of" stewardship organizations
- Ø Open Space Committee
- Ø Number and types of waterways

Weaknesses

- Ø Conditions of parks – needs improvement, including ways to prevent vandalism
- Ø Insufficient funds to secure and maintain parks
- Ø Need more facilities for the elderly
- Ø Lack of swimming facilities

Opportunities

- Ø Dog park
- Ø Forming of an alliance between Salem Public Schools and the Parks and Recreation Department to introduce kids to the park system, and nature in general

- o Public dock for boat launch/storage and swimming
- o Open Mill Brook – free flow of water as water feature with amenities such as benches and walkways

Threats

- o Dogs in children's parks